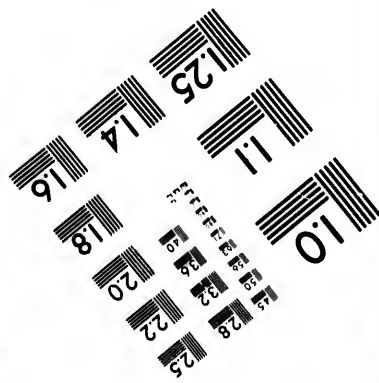
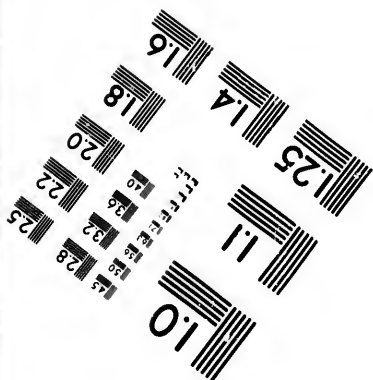
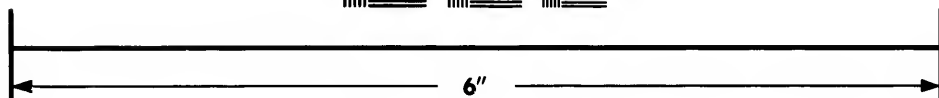
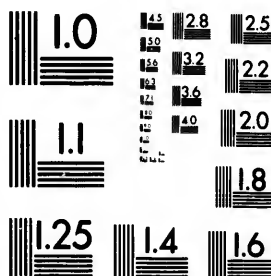


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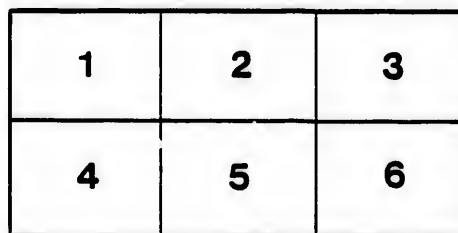
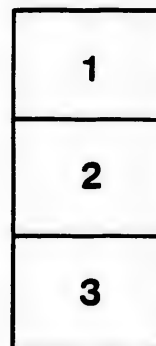
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13

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL:

ITS PLACE AND POWER  
IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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## A SERMON

PREACHED AT CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL,  
MONTREAL, OCTOBER 10th, 1875,

BY THE RECTOR.

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MONTREAL:  
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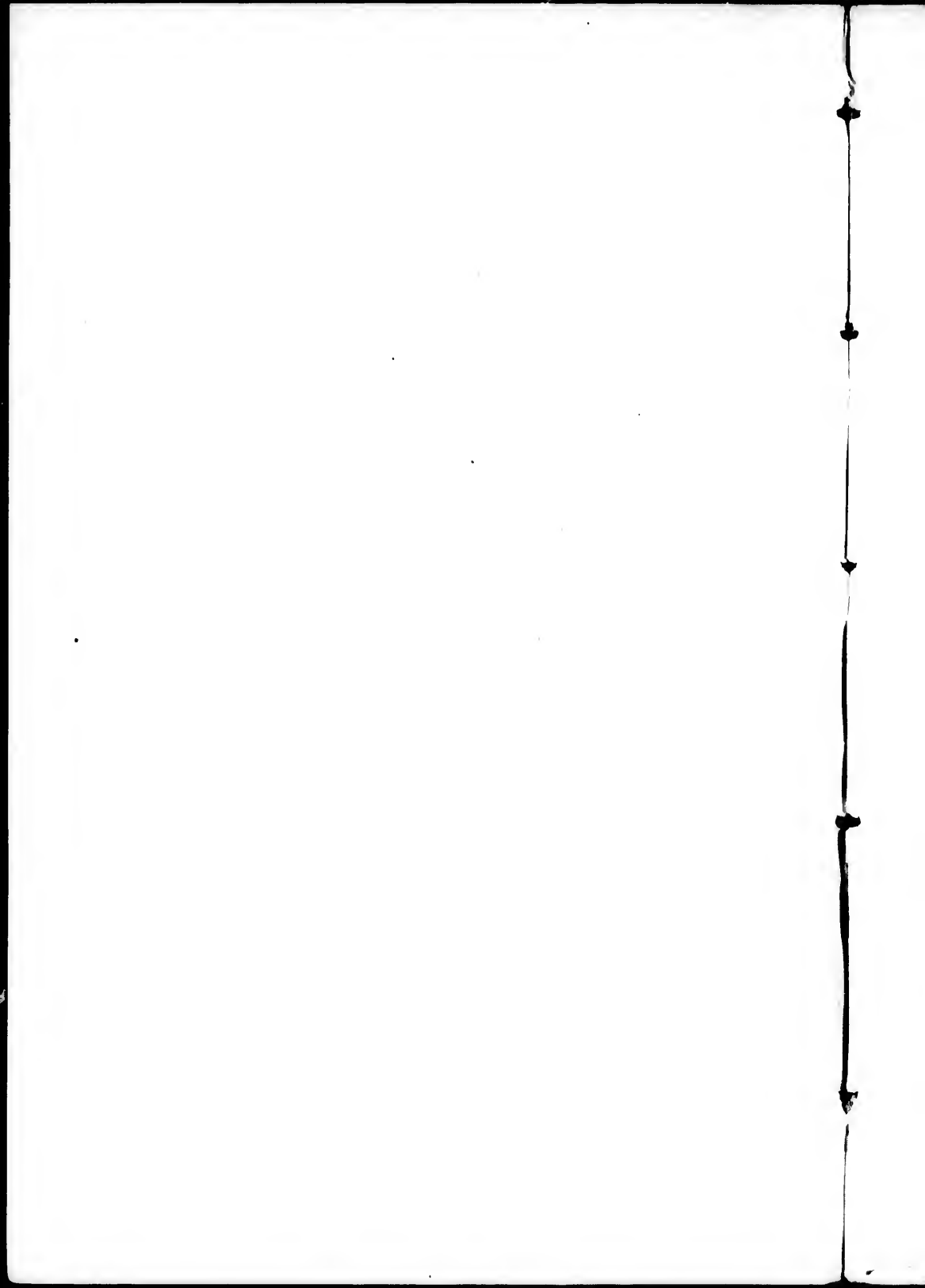
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## PREFACE.

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The following Sermon has been published at the earnest request of the Officers and Teachers of Christ Church Cathedral Sunday School. It is sent by them to the heads of families in the Congregation, in the hope of awaking a deeper interest in the work now going on in the School.

The hour of assembling the School has been changed of late to 3 o'clock, in order to suit the convenience of those living at a distance. The classes are so graded that young people of every age are provided with suitable instruction, from the infant class, (where children who can scarcely talk plainly, are taught by means of pictures and singing,) to the adult Bible classes, under the immediate personal care of the Rector and Mrs. Baldwin.

Besides the regular Bible lesson (which is studied by all the pupils who can read), the Catechism is gone completely through twice in the year by all the intermediate classes in methods suited to their respective ages. In some of the younger classes, collects and verses are learned by heart, but the aim of the School is not to burden the children with lessons to be learned by rote in addition to their week-day tasks, but to explain in an intelligent and attractive manner each principle of religion as it comes up in the course of the appointed lessons.



## S E R M O N .

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.—John xxi. 17.

Flavel says: "Two things a master commits to his servant's care: his child, and his child's clothes. When the master returns, it is a poor account for the servant to give him: Sir, here are thy child's clothes, but thy child through negligence I have lost."

Now I desire all parents here present distinctly to understand that God has imposed on them two most solemn duties as regards their children:

*First*: They are bound to see that their children are educated in the principles of the Word of God. And,

*Second*: To do all in their power for the development of their physical and intellectual energies.

As a general rule, the *second* of these duties is honorably and minutely discharged; while the *first* is too frequently partially, if not wholly, neglected. The natural results follow: ships, freighted with the costliest of cargoes, and guided by youths utterly unacquainted with the art of navigation, are allowed to drift out on the bosom of a treacherous sea, where the same giant tempests that have already wrecked the navies of the world, meet them unprepared. And when, as is inevit-

able, they sink, friends wring their hands and blame the storm, and blame the sea, and blame the strong-ribbed ship itself; while all the while the blame should rest on those who sent the ship to sea with only a child's day dream for a chart, and the restless passions for a guide.

It may indeed be well enough to develop a child's physical frame; to expand with all the learning of the schools the imprisoned powers of its mind; but if the soul, for which the whole world is no fair exchange, be left uncared for, what possible guarantee have you, at least from the Word of God, that all will not be wrecked at last; and little can it compensate you to know that your sons are familiar with the language of Homer and Plato, if their moral nature has sunk lower than the beasts of the field, and their vice and intemperance brought them to the threshold of the grave.

Now I do not mean to say that this moral wreck will never take place where the child has been brought up in the sunshine of Christianity; unhappily this is not the case, as too many instances now before our memory clearly prove; but I wish emphatically to state that, the one great cause of the ruin of thousands of our young men is their utter want of all real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They feel the need, and millions more beside them do the same, of a knowledge which has never been supplied them. They want to know where to fly in order to escape from the world, their passions and themselves; and because they need this most necessary knowledge they sink in the mire and are lost. No one can possibly accept Christ without having first heard something of His exceeding great love in dying for us, and for the acquisition of such knowledge I know of no *time* so opportune as *youth*, and no *place* so fitting as the *Sunday School*.

Some one has said: the world around us is like a neglected garden. Entering, you see luxuriant vines and magnificent creepers, from the want of walls and strong supports, lying prostrate on the ground, or fondly clinging to briars and bushes, all as weak and helpless as themselves. Cling to something they must, and not finding anything to which they may attach themselves, they of necessity sink downward to the earth. So is it

with the human heart: it needs Christ, and though by nature that heart is dead to God and opposed to His sway, yet nothing but the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ can ever make it live, and therefore it needs to hear His voice before it can believe on Him who is the Saviour of the world.

The *First* truth therefore I wish to bring before you in connection with the Sunday School is:—It seeks, like the secular school, to teach its lessons to the young.

With whom do we commence the great work of secular education? Surely not with the old and decrepit, not with those whose battle of life is well nigh over, and whose once plastic minds have long become indurated by the hardening effects of sin and wearisome neglect.

No, we do the very opposite. By intuition, as well as experience, we all know that the young are the plastic clay which the educational potter can alone mould into exquisite beauty and symmetry. This fair earth was fashioned into loveliness when it was yet young. *Then* was it that its foundations were dislocated, upheaved and furrowed fathoms deep by the huge throes of elemental wars; not when cycles of centuries had made it hoar with age. And thus is it with the child. Its mind is to the teacher what the molten iron is to the moulder, the material with which alone he can work. With the moulder not a moment is to be lost, for the metal will cool and the opportunity be gone. With the teacher the same urgency exists, for the child is fast ripening into manhood, and already the influences of the world are chilling the fresh impulses of its heart.

Now it is impossible to say how soon a child may really lay hold of Christ by faith, and therefore it is impossible too soon to begin the great work of spiritual education. Let slip these golden moments of childhood, let them be occupied simply in the development of the physical and intellectual energies, and the result will be, not that your child will be merely ignorant of all spiritual truth, but that through the perversity of contaminating influences it will have imbibed a spirit of fierce antagonism to all the doctrines of the Word of God.

And here let me say a word to those who may possibly think that the work of teaching the young can be with propriety deferred to a later period than youth; for I know there are some so warped in their judgments as to maintain that it is unfair to their children to teach them Christianity before they are able to form conclusions for themselves.

This idea I cannot better combat than by quoting what Coleridge says of himself. "Thelwell," he says, "thought it very unfair to influence his child's mind by inculcating any opinions before it had come to the years of discretion to choose for itself. I shewed him, he says, my garden, and told him it was my botanical garden. How so? said he; it is covered with weeds. O, I replied, that is only because it has not yet come to the years of discretion and choice. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow, and I thought it unfair to prejudice the soil in favor of roses and strawberries." This is the truth earnestly and forcibly taught, and I will only add that, in the garden of a child's heart, something must, by the inevitable law of nature, grow; and if you, its parent, sow not there the roses and strawberries, depend upon it the wild weeds of passion will grow, and at last utterly destroy the dearest treasure you possess.

I am quite aware that the Sunday School is regarded by many as a sort of pious and laudable effort on the part of a few well-disposed people to instruct the children of the *poor* and *unfortunate*. Fathers and mothers may even appreciate an effort which removes from their houses all the noisy and unruly members of the family, thereby giving them an afternoon of profound quiet and repose. For this and other reasons, they may consider Sunday Schools, if not highly important, at least benevolent and worthy of *some* encouragement; but that the mass of professing Christians understand, or even feebly grasp, the tremendous importance and absolute necessity of the Sunday School, I utterly deny. And this conclusion I arrive at, not from any direct assertion on the part of Christians generally, but from the coolness, the apathy and even contempt exhibited by some toward this all important movement.

No one, I trust, will imagine that I think little of

home training. So far from this, I would urge it by every possible argument that could be brought to bear on the subject. Not only is it strictly enjoined in the Word of God, but every feeling of parental love will lead you to be loyal to your children in this particular.

I do desire, however, to show that the Sunday School is absolutely necessary as being *supplemental* to all teaching which a child may receive at home.

My *first* reason, therefore, for advocating the Sunday School is: *Because its teaching is regular and systematic.*

We all know, as a matter of fact, that there are very few families in which the teaching of the children is either regular or systematic. The fathers, perhaps wearied with the routine of a whole week of business, or too often from the most supreme indifference to the subject, throw the whole work on the mothers, and the mothers, having thus to plod along alone, do so with the painful consciousness that the work is one of extreme listlessness both to themselves and their children. Then comes a time of sickness or of prolonged absence, during which the unfortunate children are left absolutely to themselves, losing both the benefits of Sunday School and home training alike.

In addition to this, the teaching of the Sunday School is *systematic*. Through the enlightened arrangement of a regular scheme of lessons, a very large portion of Scripture is annually traversed by the scholars; they are made familiar with all the striking points of Biblical narrative, and are thus led on from one degree of knowledge to another. Thus a child in constant attendance at the Sunday School is regularly and systematically trained, receiving all the while fresh accessions of Divine knowledge, the advantage of which it is impossible to calculate too highly.

My *Second* reason for advocating the Sunday School is: *Because it is of necessity more attractive than home teaching can possibly be.*

In the Sunday School there is all the charm which numbers, vivid pictures, and happy, joyous songs com-

bine to give. It is absolutely necessary to throw around all teaching of the young an air of gladness and of holiday enjoyment, in order to make them associate that which is taught with all that is pleasant and agreeable. To teach children abstract theology is exceedingly difficult; but it is possible to make them connect the learning of God's word with all that is delightful and joyous to their minds. Take then, for instance, the *singing* of our Sunday Schools. Here you will see thousands of happy children joining with heart and soul in spirit-stirring songs, whose melodies will linger in their minds years after the days of childhood are past. To deprive a child of all this, to keep him from all the music, the illustrations and diversified enjoyments is, I maintain, a real wrong to the child. It is robbing him of some of the most charming scenes of youthful life, and preventing him from throwing around all the teaching of the Word of God the inexpressible charm of a pure and sanctified enjoyment.

My *Third* reason for advocating the Sunday School is: *Because it is absolutely necessary to teach our children Christian sympathy and self-denying activity.*

Now, if there be one fault more grievous than another found with us as a church, it is our want of fraternal sympathy both towards our own people and those of other communions. We may some of us be very rich, some of us very learned, all of us very respectable, but the truth remains—we seldom get nearer each other than the pews of the church. As one has well put it: "we have been frozen together by a mutual coldness, rather than united by a mutual love," and the result is our energies are crippled and our usefulness terribly marred.

If therefore you are anxious to retain this evil, by all means keep your children from the Sunday School, by all means let them grow up with the vicious idea that their parents do not approve of their even coming in contact with the common unassorted mass who may be found in the Sunday School, and that such people are on all occasions to be avoided, and *that* fatal impression will paralyze their energies and obstruct their



usefulness all the days of their life. They will grow up with the idea that church membership is an evil to be avoided rather than a privilege to be esteemed, and that we are in fact, all of us, separated particles of church matter, whose union cannot possibly be accomplished in time, but must be deferred to the sunshine of a more blessed and fraternal world. Grace, it is true, may make a difference, but even then the lessons of childhood will remain as painful and distressing memories of the past.

Now, in the Sunday School the children do learn sympathy. They find out that there are others who really care for them beside their own parents and guardians. They learn also that there are other children as joyous and as happy as themselves; and this knowledge of others' care and of others' sympathy comes in upon their minds like a flood of golden light, to make even brighter still the sunny days of childhood.

Their very contact, too, with others, teaches them to love and sympathize with those whose path may lie along the same road as that on which they themselves travel; they gain a wider, and certainly a more generous view of the world in which they live, and one which they could never obtain within the narrow limits of their home circle.

Above all, they learn that the church is not a mere aggregation of well-dressed people who meet once a week to engage in religious service, but a living, sanctified power, redeemed, through the Lord Jesus Christ, from the world, and exhibiting in its daily life something of its Master's sympathy and self-denying love.

Here also they learn what Christian *activity* really means. They see it in the devotion of their teachers, the missionary enterprises of their school, and in the labors of the Church at large. They see the lessons of the Bible illustrated by the power of living examples, and the impression which such teaching must produce it is impossible accurately to calculate.

My *Fourth* reason for advocating the Sunday School is: *Because Religious teaching is becoming more and more divorced from secular learning.*

Victor Cousin, in his report on *Primary Education*,

says: "A religious and moral education is the great want of a people." This was a deduction, not a theory. He derived it from the experience of the past, which demonstrates that all the learning, art and power of man combined have been impotent to elevate the world *morally*. No wise man has ever been able to effect such a result by legislation, and no strong one by power. Multitudes have tried, but all have failed, and the reason of the failure has been the want of the knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

True as all this undoubtedly is, and though it is the recognition of this principle which has made England, Germany and the United States what they are to-day, yet every day the question, how to connect sound Biblical instruction with the teaching of our Common Schools, is becoming more and more involved. Each denomination naturally wishes to have its own form of doctrine inculcated; but as this is found to be practically an impossibility, the result is a tendency to divorce religion from secular training altogether, and to leave religious teaching to the energy and piety of individual churches themselves. A man may demand of the State that it should afford his child a sound secular education. He has also the right to demand that his child be brought up with the knowledge of the Word of God; but he cannot possibly, on any ground, demand of the State that his child should be brought up as an Episcopalian, or as a Presbyterian, or in fact as a member of any denomination. The State would ignore the claim at once; indeed the tendency is now to go further still, and deny the right to have any religious instruction whatever. Now, if we were Athenians or Spartans, the most we could do in that case would be to train up our children in all the learning, customs and hopes of an age that knew nothing of truth, of eternity or of God. But we are not. We are, or we profess to be, Christians, and as such we are bound to do all in our power to implant in the minds of our children the knowledge of that Gospel by which alone we ourselves have been illuminated and saved.

Recognizing this great principle, and believing that the Sunday School is the best place in which to impart this information, it should be your highest aim to

develope to the uttermost all its marvellous energies and strength. Every church, whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Methodist or Congregationalist, Protestant or Roman Catholic, seems to have caught up the idea that the Sunday School is one of the mightiest agencies of the day for the spiritual training of the young, and therefore we see them side by side, vying with each other who best can perfect a plan so potent for the accomplishment of good.

My *Fifth* reason for advocating the Sunday School is: *Because it is absolutely necessary, if the minister and the children are to become at all acquainted with each other.*

If children are kept cooped up at home, they doubtless will become well acquainted with their parents and some of their friends, but they can never get to know or understand the minister. Once a week they may see him afar off in the church, as a very cold embodiment of theology wrapped up in a surplice, but they never get to know him as a warm and affectionate pastor, full of love and sympathy for them all.

I would therefore say, take your children to the Sunday School. There they will hear kind words of encouragement from one who has learned from his Divine Master how to love and foster the young. Under this genial influence, they will grow up, strengthening his hands and cheering him on, in return, in his old age, by their devotion, their consistency and their gratitude.

Such then being some of the reasons why we should earnestly support the Sunday School, may I not speak a word to those who, while they profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ, yet do absolutely nothing for Him in this department of His vineyard. Look now for a moment at Peter, as his most blessed Master gently chides him for his thrice repeated denial. "Simon, son of Jonas," three times asks the Redeemer, "lovest thou me?" Three times the troubled Peter answered that he did, but at each reply he heard the memorable words: "Feed my lambs"—"Feed my sheep"—"Feed my sheep."

So speaks the same Saviour to you all this day. You say you love Him ; that you are grateful to Him for all His past mercies, for the sprinkled blood, for the perfected work, for the complete redemption. You say it grieves you to think of all the times in which you have practically denied Him. " Lovest thou me," is His reply to all this? If so, then yonder are my lambs ; go feed them there. Here then in the Sunday School is the place where you can shew your love and prove your devotion to your Lord. Here are the lambs awaiting your tenderest care. Hasten, hasten to the work.

But now I fancy I hear some of you say, " I have no gift for teaching, in fact. I never had, and therefore I would only be a drone and a hindrance rather than a help. I answer, did you ever try? Did you ever go there with your heart in the work, and endeavour to impart to the children something of your own zeal and love? If not, then you know nothing about your gifts. Up at once, and feed the "lambs" of the Lord Jesus Christ. If, on the contrary, you have tried, and have failed, then I say there is *something else* you can do beside teaching. You can help in the Library, help in visiting, help in singing, help, in fact, in a hundred ways which will present themselves to you as you honestly labor for the Lord. I would also impress upon all heads of families, who may themselves be unable to give any service whatever, the Christian duty of visiting the School for the sake of encouragement to others and of really seeing what is being done there. It would certainly do you good, while it would cheer and strengthen both the teachers and scholars.

And now, in conclusion, let me say a word as to the kind of teachers we really want in all our Sunday Schools.

*We need, in the first place, earnest teachers.*

Those whose zeal for the cause will not go out with a show of rain, or because the moon happens to be in the wrong quarter for fair weather. Those who will make this work their *first*, and not their *last* consideration—who will endeavour to find out not how little

they may, but how much they can do for the cause of Christ and for the welfare of the young. Those who will *prayerfully, earnestly and incessantly* labour to win those committed to their charge to the Lord Jesus Christ, not to please either the minister or superintendent, but Him who has said, "Feed my lambs."

*We need, in the second place, conscientious teachers.*

You call your boy conscientious. Very well. You send him to the stream to fish. In the evening he comes home, saying "Master, there are no fish." "What bait did you use, my boy?" is your reply. "None at all" he answers. "And did you then expect fish?" you ask.

"Expect fish," that is the point. A teacher goes to the School without having ever spent ten minutes on the lesson; has no illustrations, no anecdotes, no bait whatever ready. The children find him intensely uninteresting, and become restless and noisy in consequence. As for the teacher himself, he has the unblushing impudence to tell the Superintendent he can make *nothing* of those scholars. Yes, we want conscientious teachers: those who recognize the great truth that none can come to Christ except the Father draw them, and who will therefore bear their names before a Throne of grace, and plead with God on their behalf; those who will visit the children at their homes, look after them when absent, and shew them all they really love and sympathize with them. All this involves labour; and if you cannot give this, if you have no heart for it, then by no means come. Stay away, the church does not want you; the children do not want you; the Lord Jesus Christ does not want you. He only wants those who will feed "my lambs."

*Thirdly, we need punctual teachers.*

Unpunctual teachers are a *nuisance*: a nuisance to the Superintendent, the scholars and the School. You have before you six little children, only six noisy spirits, not great bankers, nor eminent jurists, nor learned physicians, with whom you dare not break an appointment, but only six little children; and because they are such,

you stray into the school one half hour after it has commenced, only to find that some have gone off, perhaps never to return, and the rest disturbing the harmony of another class. Yes, we want *punctual teachers*.

*Lastly, we need teachers who will uphold Christ.*

No one need ever be at a loss what to teach children. You can tell them the strangest story the ear of man ever listened to: how once Christ came into this world, the guiltless for the guilty, and died that we might live. Tell them this. Make all your teaching to be about Christ; for He is the Resurrection and the Life, and at His voice their dead hearts can be made to live. If He is not *first* in your teaching, you will utterly fail, and your labour will only be a rope of sand to vanish in a moment from your grasp.

And to those who are laboring for the love of Christ, I say, go on. In due season you will reap, if you faint not. The rain-drops in the sandstones of the first ages of the world tell of refreshing showers that once fell and are now forgotten; and thus you too may pass away; but forgotten by Christ you will never be, and your work will only be known when the Great Book is opened that records the labors of Christ's faithful dead

